



# The Holy See

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POPE FRANCIS **GENERAL AUDIENCE**

*St Peter's Square*

*Wednesday, 15 May 2019*

**[Multimedia]**

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*Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!*

We have finally reached the seventh request in the “Our Father: “And lead us not into temptation” (Mt 6:13b).

With this expression, the one praying is not only asking not to be abandoned in times of temptation, but is also imploring to be delivered from evil. The original Greek verb is very powerful: it evokes the presence of the evil one who tends to grab hold of us and bite us (cf. 1 Pt 5:8) and from whom we ask God for deliverance. The Apostle Peter also says that the evil one, the devil, prowls around us like a roaring lion, to devour us, and we ask God to deliver us.

With this twofold plea: “do not abandon us” and “deliver us”, an essential characteristic of Christian prayer emerges. Jesus teaches his friends to place the invocation of the Father above all else, also and especially in moments in which the evil one makes his threatening presence felt. Indeed, Christian prayer does not close its eyes to life. It is a filial prayer and not a childish prayer. It is not so infatuated with God’s paternity as to forget that mankind’s journey is filled with difficulties. If the last verses of the “Our Father” were not there, how could sinners, the persecuted, the desperate, the dying, pray? The last petition is precisely the petition we make when we are at the limit, always.

There is an evil in our lives that is an unassailable presence. History books are a dismal catalogue of how much our existence in this world has been an often ruinous adventure. There is a mysterious evil which is certainly not a work of God but which silently insinuates itself among the

folds of history: silent like the serpent that silently delivers poison. In some moments it seems to prevail: on some days his presence seems even more evident than God's mercy.

The prayerful are not blind and can clearly see before their eyes this evil that is so cumbersome, and so contradictory to God's mercy itself. They perceive it in nature, in history, even in their own heart. Because there are none among us who can say they are exempt from evil or at least, that they have not been tempted by it. We all know what evil is; we all know what temptation is; we have all experienced temptation of some kind in the flesh. But it is the tempter who persuades and pushes us towards evil, telling us: "do this, think about this, go down that road".

The last cry of the "Our Father" is cast against this 'wide-brimmed' evil which keeps the most varied experiences under its umbrella: mankind's mourning, innocent suffering, slavery, the exploitation of others, the tears of innocent children. All these things protest in man's heart and become a voice in the final words of Jesus' prayer.

It is precisely in the narratives of the Passion that some expressions of the "Our Father" find their most striking resonance: Jesus says: "Abba, Father, all things are possible to thee: remove this cup from me; yet not what I will, but what thou wilt" (Mk 14:36). Jesus experiences the piercing of evil in its entirety. Not only death, but death on the cross. Not only solitude, but also contempt, humiliation. Not only ill will but also cruelty, rage against him. This is what man is: a being consecrated to life, who dreams of love and goodness, but who then continually exposes himself and others to evil, to the point that we can be tempted to despair of mankind.

Dear brothers and sisters, in this way, the "Our Father" is similar to a symphony which seeks to be fulfilled in each of us. A Christian knows how enslaving the power of evil is, and at the same time, experiences how Jesus, who never gave in to its seduction, is on our side and comes to our aid.

Thus Jesus' prayer leaves us the most precious legacy: the presence of the Son of God who delivered us from evil, fighting to convert it. In the hour of the final struggle he commands Peter to put his sword back in its sheath; he ensures paradise to the thief; to all the people who were there, unaware of the tragedy that was taking place, he offers a word of peace: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Lk 23:34).

From Jesus' forgiveness on the cross springs peace; true peace comes from the cross. It is the gift of the Risen One, a gift that Jesus gives us. Just think that the first greeting the Risen Jesus gives is "peace be with you", peace in your souls, in your hearts, in your lives. The Lord gives us peace; he gives us forgiveness, but we must ask: "deliver us from evil", in order not to succumb to evil. This is our hope, the strength given to us by the Risen One who is in our midst: he is here. He is here with that strength that he gives us to go forward, and he promises to deliver us from evil.

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### ***Special Greetings***

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's Audience, especially those from England, Scotland, Ireland, Denmark, Ghana, Namibia, Australia, India, Indonesia, Korea, China, Canada and the United States of America. I greet the representatives of university centres and institutes for studies on the family, gathered from different countries for the first Family International Monitor meeting, sponsored by the John Paul II Pontifical Institute. This meeting takes place on the occasion of the International Day of Families, which this year recalls the role of families in the care of creation, our common home. In the joy of the Risen Christ, I invoke upon you and your families the loving mercy of God our Father. May the Lord bless you all!

I offer a special greeting to *young people, the elderly, the sick and newlyweds*. During this month of May dedicated to Our Lady, I ask you to imitate her. Be courageous and capable of opening your heart to God and to your brothers and sisters in order to be instruments of God's mercy and tenderness.

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[*At the conclusion of the Audience, the Holy Father submitted a written greeting to the participants at the 24th Meeting of the International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee*]

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